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the already considerable pressure on the loyalist parties on this issue, while being misread by others as indicating an expectation on our part of the early re-involvement of Sinn Fein.

My sense of the mood of the House is that legislation at this stage to provide an amnesty for terrorist-related offences would not be well received. This is compounded by the fact that time is now very short for the Bill's passage, given that the House may rise as early as mid-July. Parliament is likely to be resistant to such a move.

others of our determination to make progress on this issue. I discussed the possibility of early legislation with Tony Newton and other colleagues some weeks ago, and work on the draft Bill has taken on board a number of points made at that meeting.

In view of the changed political and security climate following the Manchester bombing, however, I am now firmly of the view that we should not attempt to push the Bill through at this stage. In particular:

- there is no prospect in the short term of Sinn Fein being allowed back into the Talks process, and no realistic possibility of early decommissioning by PIRA. The UDP and PUP are participating in the Talks, but in the absence of decommissioning by PIRA there will be no loyalist decommissioning. The legislation is therefore most unlikely to be needed over the next few months, while early enactment could increase in an unhelpful way

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my sense of the mood of the House is that legislation at this stage to provide an amnesty for terrorist-related offences would not be well received. This is compounded by the fact that time is now very short for the Bill's passage, given that the House may rise as early as mid-July: Parliament is likely to be resistant to such a truncated timescale for a Bill of this kind.

the Irish will not legislate before the Dail rises for the summer. Without their legislation, decommissioning in the Republic, where most PIRA weapons are hidden, cannot proceed: nor can a Commission with the sort of role envisaged by Mitchell be established. The Irish may, however, indicate publicly their willingness to recall the Dail during the recess to enact the legislation if required.

Intensive discussions continue with the parties, including the UUP, on the handling of decommissioning in the Talks process. On the specific question of early legislation, I put it to David Trimble that it would look odd for us to rush through legislation for an amnesty in current circumstances. He did not demur. I have no doubt that he still wishes to see clear evidence of the

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determination of both Governments to make progress on this issue. I believe we can meet his concern without legislating, but instead by publishing, together with the Irish, co-ordinated legislative proposals for consideration by the parties, probably in the sub-committee of plenary which we envisage being established to take forward the decommissioning issue. The two draft Bills would be tabled under cover of a joint paper by the two Governments setting out their purpose and explaining any differences between them: preparation of this paper is in hand. This would give the sub-committee something substantive to bite on at an early stage, and would avoid accusations from the participants of inadequate consultation. It would also demonstrate the serious intent of both Governments to tackle decommissioning, while allowing us to adjust our proposals if necessary in the light of discussions on modalities in the sub-committee.

[This approach would, of course, in normal circumstances preclude legislation until the autumn. For the reasons already given, I do not believe that this is likely to present a problem in practice. Nevertheless, the Unionists may well seek additional reassurance that we would be prepared to consider recalling Parliament if it proves necessary to legislate early. Subject to your views I believe that we should give such an assurance. I believe that the Irish may well give such an undertaking, and in the unlikely event that circumstances arose where we needed to do so (ie with a PIRA ceasefire in place and agreement on all sides to begin decommissioning) then I am sure that Parliament would recognise the need, and desirability, of proceeding in this way.]

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ANNEX B

I should be grateful for confirmation that you and NI colleagues are content with the approach I have outlined above. I am copying this letter to members of NI, the Lord President, the Chief Whip and Sir Robin Butler.

- Have been keeping open option of legislating before recess. Now firmly of the view that it would be unwise to do so.
- Mood of the House has changed in the wake of the Manchester bomb; we may not be able to count on receiving broad support for what amounts to an amnesty for terrorists. Furthermore time is now very tight, given that Parliament may rise in mid-July.
- Reasons for early publication: avoid situation where lack of legislation prevented implementation of decommissioning; and to reassure Unionists and others. But decommissioning in short term no longer a realistic prospect after Manchester, and believe Unionist concerns can be met in other ways.
- Propose instead to aim to publish, with the Irish, co-ordinated legislative proposals for consideration by the parties, possibly in plenary sub-committee, under cover of a joint paper to explain the purpose of the two Bills and the reasons for any differences between them. Officials are working on this.
- Believe that David Trimble will accept this approach; it will show that the two Governments are not ducking the issue of decommissioning, and it will give him and other parties an opportunity to consider and comment on the legislative proposals before they are put before the respective legislatures.

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## SPEAKING NOTE ON HANDLING OF DECOMMISSIONING BILL

- Intend to write to you and colleagues on handling of decommission legislation.
- Have been keeping open option of legislating before recess. Now firmly of the view that it would be unwise to do so.
- Mood of the House has changed in the wake of the Manchester bomb; we may not be able to count on receiving broad support for what amounts to an amnesty for terrorists. Furthermore time is now very tight, given that Parliament may rise in mid-July.
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He might insist on an assurance that we will recall Parliament if it proves necessary to legislate early. Do not think this will be necessary in practice. But worth considering giving such an assurance, not least because the Irish may do so.]

- If you are content, I shall write formally.

PS/Michael Ancrum(L,B+DANI)	-B
PS/Malcolm Moss(L,BOR+DNSS)	-B
PS/Baroness Denton(L,DED+DANI)	-B
PS/Sir David Fell	-B
Mr Thomas(L+B)	-B
Mr Bell	-B
Mr Legge	-B
Mr Leach(L+B)	-B
Mr Steele	-B
Mr Watkins	-B
Mr Wood(L+B)	-B
Mr Beaton	-B
Mr Currie	-B
Mr Hill(L+B)	-B
Mr Lavery	-B
Mr Maccabe	-B
Mr Perry	-B
Mr Stephens	-B
Ms Checksfield	-B
Miss Harrison(L+B)	-B
Ms Mapstone	-B
Mr Whysall(L+B)	-B
Ms Collins, Cab Off (via IPL)	-B
Mr O'Mahony, TAU	-B
Mr Lemont, RID	-B
HMA Dublin	-B
Mr Westmacott, (via RID)	-B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman	-B
Mrs McNally(L+B)	-B

## File Note

### TALKS: RULES OF PROCEDURE - 24 JUNE

A long day during which the Irish and the UUP talked but failed to communicate. Attempts by HMG to encourage both sides to understand the other's position led to several attacks of paranoia on the Irish side, directed at British good faith. They eventually came gradually to accept that Unionist concerns about paragraph 13 and 13A of the draft rules of procedure we had agreed with them on Thursday were genuine - reflecting political/presentational problems which the wording could not solve.

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